



The Virginia Saltwater Review

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Vol. 22, No. 18
August 15, 2008

by

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OVERVIEW



Now in mid-August, Virginia anglers are finding a variety of summer fish in our waters. The normal culprits are around, including spot, croaker, and sea mullet. Impressive flounder are still being landed (see the picture provided by Jerry Thrash of Queen's Creek Outfitters). Offshore, a few tuna are still being landed, but dolphin and white marlin have picked up the slack. At the wrecks, anglers continue to find black sea bass and spadefish.

However, the trick is to find the right day, and the right place, with the right wind direction. The slick calm days we saw just a few weeks ago have been replaced by ever changing winds (too many with a northerly slant) and wave heights. Just wait an hour, because it will probably change once again!

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

Donna at Captain Bob's reports that fishing in Chincoteague is excellent. Although many species had a slow start due to a late spring with high winds, once the flounder showed up, fishing took off like a NASA rocket! It hasn't slowed up yet. Currently, the hot catch is croaker and kingfish, with some spot mixed in. The occasional flounder are also available. Offshore, anglers must venture to the 30 or 40 Fathom Line to hook up with some yellowfin tuna. Large dolphin were found beyond the Parking Lot area. Bluefin tuna fishing has died back considerably, but the wrecks are busy with spadefish, triggerfish, a few sea bass and tautog. Other offshore reports included whale sightings, hundred of various types of turtles, and schools of colorful fish.

Wachapreague

At the Wachapreague Marina, the weather kept many anglers home this weekend. Those that went out found really nice tautog and black sea bass at the offshore wrecks. Offshore, the tuna run has stopped, but anglers have caught plentiful dolphin. In the bay, coolers were filled with croaker, and flounder are plentiful. Sea mullet and spot are numerous as well. Citations for the week include sea mullet and croaker.

Anglers are catching croaker and flounder at Captain Zed's Marina. In fact, the large croaker finally seem to have arrived. Sea mullet were caught as well. Citations this week include a 10-pound flounder. Offshore, black sea bass were found at the wrecks. Tuna fishing was slow, but gaffer-sized dolphin were hooked. A few white marlin have been spotted in the Norfolk Canyon as well.

Onancock

Fishing hasn't changed much out of Onancock, according to Captain Wil. Flounder action has improved, but most are undersized. Croaker are around, but not very active. Nice-sized sea mullet were caught around local shell beds, and spot are biting on bloodworms. No trout have been reported yet.

Cape Charles

At Chris' Bait and Tackle this weekend, flounder were caught off of Cherrystone Reef. They were also caught at the Lumpy Bottom around Buoy 42. Numerous croaker were found at Oyster. From the piers, anglers caught a mixed bag of spot and croaker. Small grey trout have come in from around the Concrete Ships. A few tarpon have also been reported from the seaside of the Eastern Shore.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

At Cobb's Marina, anglers reported flounder from the 2nd and 3rd islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. A black drum citation was brought in from that area as well. Spadefish, a few croaker, and Spanish mackerel have also been caught in the area.

According to staff at Sunset Boating Center, decent-sized croaker were caught at the Monitor Merrimac Bridge Tunnel. At the Hampton Bar, small throw-back flounder have been found as well.

Many boats went fishing from Salt Pond's Marina last week and reported limits of dolphin and two huge Spanish mackerel. A mixed bag of flounder, croaker, and spot were caught by area anglers.

Plenty of action was reported at the York River Fishing Center. A 7-pound, 7-ounce flounder was brought in from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The York River was also productive last week with catches of flounder, croaker, spot, and numerous Spanish mackerel.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Big flounder were found at the structures of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Back River Reef, Cape Henry Wreck, and the Cell. Sight fishing for cobia in the lower bay and along the ocean front is very good. Schools of red and black drum have been found by fishermen looking for cobia. If you spend enough time sight fishing near the mouth of the bay, you have a chance at a Chesapeake Bay

Slam. King Mackerel are making a good showing along the Virginia Beach Ocean front. Spanish mackerel are an easy catch in this same area. A few large sheepshead are available at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel though this has not been a good season compared to previous years. Spadefish are biting on the coastal wrecks like the Tiger and Santore. Some nice triggerfish can also be found on wrecks in this area. Offshore action is good for billfish and dolphin. A few really nice yellowfin tuna have been caught out in the deep by anglers searching for billfish. Offshore bottom fishing continues to be good for tilefish and grouper.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

As we push toward the end of summer, anglers are finding a multitude of different fish to target. Flounder is still the main attraction inshore, with doormats lunging at live bait presented around structure in the lower bay. The Cell area, as well as the 1st and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel are producing. Keeper flatties are also coming from offshore wrecks. Although each day is a gamble, whether you are drifting, live-baiting, or jigging, odds are good for landing keepers with a few trophies scattered in. On windy days, Lynnhaven Inlet is providing good catches of decent fish lately.

The next top species is cobia. The transition to their usual top-water rendezvous with structure is providing a new approach for cobia hunters. More fish are also beginning to cruise the surface. While most of cobia are still not huge, a few whoppers are taking offerings, especially along the coastal waters off Sandbridge and False Cape. This trend should continue to gain momentum.

The king mackerel bite continues at a steady pace. With cooler air temperatures this week, kings should become more active along the shoreline, especially if an easterly direction is mixed in. Trollers are reporting scattered catches of fish ranging to about 20 pounds by live baiting and fast trolling south of Rudee Inlet in about 20 to 60 feet of water.

According to local charter captains, the Spanish mackerel fishing along Virginia Beach is some of the best they have seen in years. Big fish, with many ranging from 22 to 24 inches, are keeping trollers content. A fast presentation of small Clark or Drone spoons on a planer will do the trick for some decent Spanish action.

Red drum are still schooling around the lower bay shoals and near the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Black drum are also still meandering around the four artificial islands of the Bridge Tunnel where folks are hooking and releasing fish on artificial lures.

The great puppy drum (juvenile red drum) action is still going on within most any skinny water location in Tidewater, with steady action within Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets. These young reds will hit a variety of baits, with fresh cut mullet and Gulp mullets the top choices lately.

Most have lost interest in spadefish, but some decent sized fish are still available along the northern span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the four artificial islands, and many inshore structures. Folks are spotting numerous sheepshead along the pilings of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel mixed in with the spades and triggerfish, but they are not taking baits easily for most. And what about those triggers? They are everywhere on lower bay structures and inshore wrecks. These little

fish will take most any offering on most any type of rig. But be aware they can pack a nasty bite.

Croaker are everywhere. Bigger hardheads are coming from the deeper areas north of the 3rd island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Back River Reef, and the Cell. The folks at Ocean's East 2 report that big fish up to 2 pounds are coming from the West Norfolk Bridge area in the Elizabeth River. Anglers fishing Oyster are also still filling coolers in the back waters. Tarpon are also available in the deeper holes and along the cuts in Oyster.

Nice spot are hitting within Rudee and Lynnhaven Inlets on bloodworms, with good numbers of smaller fish also available off Cape Henry. Pier catches are routine for this time of year with small croaker, spot, and bluefish the norm, with a shot at a king or Spanish mackerel from the beach piers. Small pompano are also showing off the Ocean View Pier.

Amberjack are providing good opportunities on offshore wrecks and at the Southern Towers. Although most don't consider jack crevelle to be an inshore species, often these fish are noted schooling around the bay late in the summer. Although catches are not common, trolling spoons and live bait in these areas may entice a lucky hit. Schools of jack crevelle were spotted at various locations near the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel lately.

Not many boats made it offshore this week, but Captain Steve Richardson predicts that the marlin bite should still be decent at the Canyon. He also had a few nice catches of 60-pound class yellowfin tuna and nice gaffer dolphin recently. Scattered citation dolphin and big wahoo are also still in the mix, mostly coming from the Cigar area.

Virginia Middle Bay

Plenty of Spanish mackerel continue to be caught in the area, and depending on trolling speed, bluefish catches are also likely. Flounder can still be found around the jetties; however, finding a keeper is a little harder. There was a report of a near citation-sized flounder being caught near Smith Point Marina. Small croaker can be found in the deeper water with some larger ones haunting some of the creeks in the area. Small spot were biting as well and appear to be getting larger. Reports of trout are floating around as well.

Capt. Jim Thompson reports that the fishing has picked up since last week. The fish are less stressed than they were during the warm days of August last week. The trout are plentiful and fat. Spot catches are number ones with some twos mixed in. Bluefish are numerous at the mouths of the rivers and in the bay, but Spanish mackerel were not as plentiful as last week. The Rappahannock was good last week from the White Stone Bridge all the way to the mouth of the river. The Spike produced spot, and Butlers Hole produced spot and trout. In the bay, fishing was great at the Corn House, the Deep Rock off Gwynn's Island, and the Piankatank River. All of the catches included flounder, but only some were keepers. Sea mullet were still very plentiful and are a great fish for the table.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Spanish mackerel are still available along the drop off at Windmill Bar, and there have been fish caught near R2 and southward towards Wolf Trap as well. The Spanish bite was best at 6 to 8 knots as shown on the GPS. Small to medium croaker and spot continue to be caught at Cherry Point, off

Gwynn Island in 25-30 feet of water, at the Spike (#3 Rappahannock marker), and at Butlers Hole. White perch are mixed in. Flounder action has slowed. Only one citation was registered this week, and it came from jigging rather than trolling or drifting. Red drum continue to be available almost anywhere there is grass or shell bottom. They were mixed in with croaker, spot, and small stripers, and are hitting Gulp baits. The creeks are full of small menhaden, and drum, speckled trout, and bluefish are feeding on them. Bluefish (one to three pounds in weight) have been caught trolling around the Cell, Buoy 42, and Windmill Bar.

Virginia Beach

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, offshore boats reported catches of numerous dolphin and white marlin with a few wahoo mixed in. Two yellowfin tuna were also reported. Inshore, anglers were finding cobia, king mackerel, spadefish, triggerfish, sharks, taylor bluefish, and Spanish mackerel. Headboats reported success with flounder, black sea bass and croaker. The inlet produced flounder, spot, taylor bluefish, and speckled trout.

Virginia Piers

Anglers reported few spot, croaker, and a few flounder at the Ocean View Pier this week. Everyday, there is a slightly different variety, including sheepshead and seahorses.

Spot, roundhead, croaker, bluefish, and several keeper flounder were reported from the Lynnhaven Pier. The croaker have been small, but nice-sized spot have been found.

At the Little Island Fishing Pier in Virginia Beach, a few red drum were landed. Spot and sea mullet were plentiful, and crabbing has been especially productive. Anglers are still catching Spanish mackerel in the evening along with bluefish.

According to staff at the Sandbridge Pier, anglers have found spot, bluefish, small red drum, and pompano this week, along with scattered butterfish and sea mullet.

Outer Banks, NC

The fishing news out of North Carolina continues to be Spanish mackerel. The bite has been good all the way down to Cape Hatteras. Other fishing continues to improve as well. Water temps are currently running in the upper seventies to lower eighties.

The offshore fishing out of Nags Head has seen limits of dolphin being caught as well as a good bite of wahoo, amberjack and billfish. Conversely, the tuna bite has slowed down dramatically. Mid-range anglers caught king mackerel, cobia, and striped bass while bottom droppers have had luck with triggerfish, sheepshead, and sea bass around the artificial reefs. Inshore anglers managed to catch their limits of Spanish mackerel and bluefish, with flounder and sea mullet thrown in as well.

Anglers working the piers had the same success story with Spanish mackerel. The key to remember is that

they bite early in the morning and late in the afternoon when the sun is low on the horizon. King mackerel are working around the piers, and bluefish schools have been moving through with good regularity. Sheepshead and taugtog could be found around the pilings of bridges in the inlet and sounds.

Surf fishing south of Oregon Inlet also saw good catches of Spanish mackerel. Anglers at the point found numerous Spanish mackerel in the 4-pound range. Other catches included citation-sized sea mullet, bluefish, a few small red drum, and flounder.

Anglers fishing out of Cape Hatteras saw some decent offshore fishing including wahoo, king mackerel, dolphin, and a few blackfin tuna. In the sound, a good variety could be found with bluefish, Spanish mackerel, trout, and flounder.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.












Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

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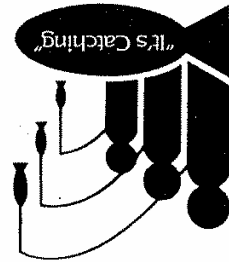
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